



McGREGOR W. SCOTT

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of California*

NEWS RELEASE

Sacramento
501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel 916/554-2700
TTY 916/554-2877

Fresno
2500 Tulare St., Suite 4401
Fresno, CA 93721
Tel (559) 497-4000
TTY (559) 497-4500

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Contact: Rosemary Shaul (916)
554-2802

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae>

MAJOR METHAMPHETAMINE AND MARIJUANA ORGANIZATION DISMANTLED FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

SACRAMENTO -- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a federal grand jury returned an eight count indictment charging HUBERT MARIO RAMIREZ, 24, of Stockton; SAMUEL BOTELLO MONDRAGON, 25, of Stockton; ADRAIN ORTEGA-DIAZ, 39, of Stockton; MIGUEL VILLA-CONTRERAS, 24, address unknown; RUBEN DIAZ, 31, of Stockton; EDUARDO VILLA-CONTRERAS, 26, address unknown; JOSE JUAN AYALLA-LOPEZ, 20, address unknown; JOSE ALFREDO VILLA-VIA SENOR, 20, address unknown; JULIO ADRIAN NEVEL, 31, address unknown; PATRICO MALENO, 33, address unknown; LENO ARREOLA, 30, address unknown; and PABLO ARREOLA, 26, address unknown, with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, conspiracy to manufacture over 1000 plants of marijuana, manufacturing over 1000 plants of marijuana, conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute marijuana and possession with intent to distribute marijuana. ADRIAN ORTEGA-DIAZ was also charged with being a deported alien found in the United States. A related indictment was returned against BALTAZAR VASQUEZ, 43, of Denair, with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine. All persons named in the two indictments are illegal aliens.

This case is the product of an extensive/joint investigation by the State of California Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement and the Mountain and Valley Marijuana Investigation Team

“MAVMIT”.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michael Beckwith, who is prosecuting the case, the indictment alleges that HUBERT MARIO RAMIREZ financed two large marijuana plots, one on federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in western El Dorado County and one on Clementine State Park near Auburn in Placer County. Significant environmental damage connected to the marijuana grows was found in both locations, including clear cutting, stream diversion, and illegal pesticides. ADRIAN ORTEGA-DIAZ worked as the foreman running both marijuana garden operations. MIGUEL VILLA-CONTRERAS worked under ADRIAN ORTEGA-DIAZ as a lower-level foreman. HUBERT MARIO RAMIREZ was also involved in the distribution of methamphetamine. BALTAZAR VASQUEZ and SAMUEL BOTELLO MONDRAGON supplied RAMIREZ with the methamphetamine. The remaining defendants worked in one of the two marijuana gardens or were arrested with MIGUEL VILLA-CONTRERAS and found to be in possession of 25 pounds of process marijuana.

“Law enforcement in this region has committed to extricating large-scale marijuana grows by Mexican-based drug trafficking organizations from our public lands. Today’s indictment is another significant accomplishment in that effort,” said United States Attorney McGregor Scott. “These organizations pose a real threat to the public, law enforcement, and the environment. I commend the state Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement for a masterful investigation of an organization wreaking havoc on the natural environment in our public lands to grow marijuana, dealing in large quantities of methamphetamine while armed with several firearms, and which was composed exclusively of persons who have no legal right to be in this country.”

“The BLM appreciates the collaboration and support of the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our partner agencies in the successful culmination of this investigation. This will be a clear deterrent to others who might pose a threat to the public’s safety and whom by their actions create environmental damage to our public lands.” said Troy Bolen, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

“The overall success of this investigation is due to the collaboration of every agency involved throughout this investigation.” stated State of California Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, Special Agent in Charge Brent Orick.

The maximum statutory penalty for the methamphetamine violations are life imprisonment with a mandatory minimum of ten years. The maximum statutory penalty for the conspiracy to manufacture and the manufacturing of over a 1000 marijuana plants are life imprisonment with a ten year mandatory minimum. The maximum statutory penalty for possession of the processed marijuana and the immigration charge has a maximum penalty of twenty years. However, the actual sentence will be dictated by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of factors, and will be imposed at the discretion of the court.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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